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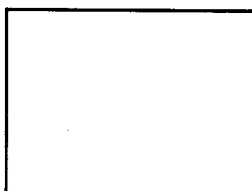
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## EGYPT-ISRAEL: Weizman Trip

[ ] The lack of progress during Israeli Defense Minister Weizman's trip to Cairo on Thursday and Friday cannot have come as a surprise to either side. Both the Israeli and Egyptian governments played the visit primarily for its domestic and international impact, although they share a genuine interest in keeping alive their channel of communication through Weizman.

[ ] Israeli Prime Minister Begin presumably had several objectives in pressing for Weizman's visit:

- To put Egyptian President Sadat on the spot and probe Egyptian intentions.
- To shift public attention away from the US-Israeli dispute, if only temporarily.
- To counter criticism from the opposition Labor Party that he is letting the opportunity for peace with Egypt slip away by adhering to an inflexible position.

[ ] Thus far, Israeli press reactions to Weizman's trip have been contradictory and inconclusive. Some commentators--apparently inspired by official leaks--have tried to put the best possible face on the results. The moderate *Jerusalem Post*, for example, argued that the visit was a test of Sadat's peaceful intent and an opportunity to make clear to Egypt that peace can be achieved only through direct negotiations, not by relying on the US to "bludgeon Israel into submitting" to Egyptian demands.

[ ] Only the Labor-oriented *Davart* has called the visit a failure. Unless the talks achieved more than appearances suggest, this perception is likely to grow, and give the Labor Party more ammunition for attacking Begin. The continuing impasse may also aggravate differences between Begin and moderates in his coalition, especially in the Democratic Movement for Change. Seven members of this party abstained instead of endorsing Begin's negotiating stance in the Knesset earlier this week.

[ ] Weizman would say little to the press after briefing Begin on his return--another sign that the talks did not go well. Sadat's refusal to go forward with negotiations probably

has added to Weizman's sense of frustration and disenchantment with Begin. After his inept power play last week, however, Weizman is likely to proceed with greater caution in dealing with Begin, at least for a while.

[ ] Sadat seems to have read Begin's propaganda intentions correctly and acted to counter them. He agreed to the meeting, suggested through the Egyptian media that this could be Israel's final chance to show that it wants peace, and put out the word during the visit that he felt "tricked" because Weizman brought no new proposals. Egyptian officials could not really have expected Weizman to indicate new Israeli flexibility. Most of them believe Sadat's initiative is already dead and were incredulous when Sadat agreed to meet Weizman.

[ ] We doubt that Sadat expected new initiatives either. In addition to countering Begin's ploy, he may also have wanted to use the meeting to dramatize to Israel and his Arab critics that Egypt is not interested in a bilateral deal. Such a deal would have been implicit in any resumption of negotiations at this time. Another aspect of Sadat's strategy is to encourage criticism of Begin's policies in Israel and the US.

[ ] Neither Israel or Egypt is likely to close completely the channel of communication between Weizman and Egyptian Minister of War Jamasi. Israel does not want to write off the possibility that Egypt might eventually be willing to return to bilateral talks, and Egypt wants to keep the channel open in case domestic pressure in Israel forces a change in policy or in the government. [ ]